

City Council

Special Meeting Minutes

**April 9, 2019
Library Meeting Room
951 Spruce Street
7:00 PM**

Call to Order – Mayor Muckle called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The following members were present:

City Council: ***Mayor Robert Muckle***
 Mayor Pro Tem Jeff Lipton
 Councilmember Jay Keany
 Councilmember Chris Leh
 Councilmember Susan Loo
 Councilmember Dennis Maloney
 Councilmember Ashley Stolzmann

Staff Present: ***Heather Balsler, City Manager***
 Megan Davis, Deputy City Manager
 Rob Zuccaro, Planning & Building Safety Director
 Meredyth Muth, City Clerk

DISCUSSION/DIRECTION – REGIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE AND PROPOSED BALLOT MEASURE

Deputy City Manager Davis stated this is a discussion of regional affordable housing strategies. The Boulder County Regional Housing Partnership is a regional collaborative that was established in November of 2017 and really emerged from the Consortium of Cities. The members of the consortium identified affordable housing as a key need and the need for a collective response. They began looking for what would be considered reasonable responses to this. The Regional Housing Partnership produced an inventory of affordable housing in the County and what would be needed to meet the demands we are seeing. They are now working on educational pieces, financing options, working with the business community, and general outreach. They are also looking at funding opportunities. The group is visiting all of the elected bodies in the county for input on this.

Davis introduced Kathy Fedler from the Housing and Community Investment Division for the City of Longmont, Jim Williams from Boulder County Housing and Human Services, and Michelle Krezek, the Deputy to the Boulder County Commissioners.

Fedler stated this is the fourth presentation they have given to elected officials and most of the feedback they have gotten is to hold off on the ballot question until 2020.

Williams stated that with each passing year the problem is getting worse. Currently 54% of renters in the County are cost burdened which is spending more than 30% of income on rent. Median home sales prices continue to climb. We now have 52,000 County residents who pay more than half of their income for housing.

Fedler stated the five priorities of the collaborative are 1. To establish a regional goal, 2. Bolster Financial Resources, 3. Secure Land/Redevelopment Opportunities, 4. Preserve Affordability, and 5. Consider a Regulatory Process.

The Regional Housing goal was set at 12% by 2035. Each jurisdiction is working to meet this with multiple strategies that work for them. Nine communities signed on to the partnership. She reviewed the structure of the regional partnership. What the Partnership needs most from the City Councils is to be champions for this work, help in thinking about creating funding solutions, promoting public support, and encouraging others to participate. She reviewed their recent accomplishments.

Williams reviewed the recent polling around a possible ballot measure. They tested voter reaction to two different proposals for either a property or sales tax at two different levels each. Members discussed the results and other options.

Councilmember Loo stated from her reading of the results there does not appear to be much support for a new tax for this. Williams stated the amount of support they see or don't see will strongly impact if the County goes for a ballot issue or not and when. It is likely to require many things including the tax that would need to happen.

Williams noted some of the survey results: 86% agree workers can't afford to work here; 76% think elected officials should do something; 72% think diversity in the community is desirable. People do recognize the lack of housing and affordability is an issue. Most say something should be done, but they don't know what exactly. Members discussed how these results might affect a ballot proposal.

Williams noted outreach and education will be necessary. 2020 is likely the earliest they would go to the ballot.

Williams stated in 2019 the Partnership will focus on bringing partners together, helping people understand the issue, how access to affordable housing affects the community as a whole, and that it will take a regional effort to solve the problem. He noted the housing summit scheduled for May 10 has been postponed until September.

Mayor Pro Tem Lipton asked if having people live near where they work is a goal. He stated people have commuted for years and that is not new. He asked if there is an assumption people shouldn't have to commute. Krezek stated one of the things they hear

is that it is too expensive for low income people to live here so that adds to congestion from incommuting. We all hear over and over how our residents don't like congestion.

Mayor Pro Tem Lipton stated some communities create new jobs but don't create new residences so there is an imbalance. He asked if it is the responsibility of all of us to cure a problem for other communities. They should fix their land use codes.

Krezek stated these are going to be regional issues that we may all address differently, but we need to have regional discussions. Mayor Pro Tem Lipton stated we can't build ourselves out of this without changing land use.

Mayor Pro Tem Lipton stated there have been a number of tax increases over the years and when the County asks polling questions that should be part of a larger conversation with all of the other new taxes that are being considered in the region. Krezek agreed noting when the County goes to the voters with any ballot question it will be tested against all of the other issues we know are out there.

Councilmember Keany stated when talking about affordable housing it should be compared to the number of employees in the community. Boulder continues to increase their number of jobs but not allowing new residential units. We should compare the number of affordable housing units to the employment base. Krezek stated that is a regional policy discussion for the elected officials.

Councilmember Leh stated we need to have another summit that takes this discussion further and gets to some of the sovereign issues between the communities. Each community will do this differently. He stated most people don't understand deed restricted affordable housing; you need to be very specific that most people won't benefit from this. People who make \$100,000/year won't benefit from this. He noted housing burden is one thing and the other issue is transportation burden. Many of the people who work lower paying jobs have to commute here to do that.

Krezek stated the Partnership is taking this year to gather the right information and do the outreach so if we go in 2020 we will be more prepared. We need to discuss all of these things.

Councilmember Stolzmann stated she struggles to think a regressive tax will address this problem. It seems counterintuitive a fee will solve this. She stated it is easy to look at other communities and see what is wrong. We too have more employees incommuting. Councilmember Stolzmann stated it is hard to actually agree on exactly what elected officials should do to solve this.

Councilmember Stolzmann stated this is a regional problem and the County is responsible for health and human services so the County should be taking the lead as a centralized approach which is more efficient. Mayor Muckle agreed.

Councilmember Leh stated we are going to need strong supportive polling numbers to get something to pass.

Krezek stated the current emphasis is on workforce housing which while in the past it has been for low income housing so they are two different things. Councilmember Loo stated most of the time police don't want to live in the community in which they work. She added that looking at the numbers, many people won't want to subsidize others after they have scrimped and saved to live here.

Krezek stated BVSD has said their teacher's number one issue is how far they have to commute to teach here. Fedler stated that in Longmont they are seeing slower response times because their firefighters can't afford to live there.

Councilmember Maloney asked if the results of the polling were consistent across the different communities. Krezek stated they were fairly consistent.

Mayor Muckle stated perhaps it would be best to hold until 2022. Krezek stated the timing will be decided by everyone in the region and the partnership.

Krezek stated affordable housing and homelessness are noted as the biggest issues they hear about from residents.

City Manager Balsler stated there will be more follow-up on this as the year progresses.

DISCUSSION/DIRECTION – POLLING FOR NOVEMBER BALLOT ISSUES

City Manager Balsler stated staff is checking in with Council regarding if Council would like to do some polling on the two anticipated issues on the ballot in November; the Rec Center TABOR question and an excise tax on marijuana cultivation. She reviewed the election calendar.

Councilmember Maloney stated he wonders if we would get any useful information at this point. He is not sure how polling would help us in the TABOR question. He stated he doesn't think there is a strong need for polling.

Councilmember Keany stated if we find out the support is low we could choose not to spend the money on the election.

Councilmember Maloney stated he doesn't think there is a big risk at this point to simply put them on ballot.

Councilmember Stolzmann stated she doesn't feel strongly one way or another, if we do conduct a poll she would like to ask a question about starting a plastic bag tax question as well.

City Manager Balser stated when we typically go to the ballot we poll. We haven't this time and that may be fine, it is just a point for consideration.

Mayor Pro Tem Lipton stated getting good polling information on TABOR questions is difficult; it is very complicated. He stated he is also interested in gauging community sentiment on a bag tax or fee.

Councilmember Loo stated she would rather go straight to the ballot and not worry about it. Regarding the bag fee question she would like to see that on the citizen survey in 2020.

Councilmember Stolzmann asked if there was interest in having a bag tax question on the ballot in November. Members decided that was an issue for the 2020 work plan and citizen survey.

The consensus was not to poll this year and put the plastic bag tax idea on the 2020 work plan.

ADVANCED AGENDA AND IDENTIFICATION OF FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Members discussed the advanced agenda. City Manager Balser stated staff is adding two items to the 4/16 agenda: board and commission vacancies and a legislative update. Staff will add a discussion of the excise tax ballot language to the advanced agenda.

Mayor Pro Tem Lipton wondered if the joint meeting with the Revitalization Commission should be pushed back until the two new members have been appointed to fill the recent vacancies. Councilmember Maloney stated he would like to use the May 14 meeting for an urban renewal education and policy meeting with just Council.

Councilmember Loo stated she would like a better handle on how our regional neighbors are using urban renewal to attract new businesses and if it has made a difference. Councilmember Loo also asked if there is anything we can do other than financial subsidies that would attract development. Members agreed that is a good use of the May 14 meeting.

ADJOURN

Members adjourned at 8:54 pm.

Robert P. Muckle, Mayor

Meredyth Muth, City Clerk